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E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 536 - APRIL 5, 1978

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING
PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY
OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

1. LEBANON. THE CEASE FIRE CONTINUES TO HOLD GENERALLY, BUT THERE IS SPORADIC SHOOTING. ON APRIL 4 UNIDENTIFIED GUNNERS, PRESUMED TO BE PALESTINIANS, FIRED MORTAR ROUNDS WHICH LANDED NEAR THE POSITIONS OF NORWEGIAN U.N. TROOPS GUARDING THE Khardali Bridge as well as in Marjuyun, two miles west, but caused no casualties. Christian militia-men in Marjuyun returned the fire.

2. U.N. MIDDLE EAST COMMANDER Siilasvuo and UNIFIL Commander Emanuel Erskine paid a one-day visit to Lebanon yesterday. Siilasvuo met with Foreign and Defense Minister Boutros and Army Commander Khourey and told reporters that no date had been set for Lebanese army units to deploy south, other than "at the earliest possible time." According to Boutros the talks with Siilasvuo had yielded "tangible progress" on Israeli withdrawal and the establishment of Lebanese authority in south Lebanon.

3. MEANWHILE, THIRTY LEBANESE GENDARMES MOVED SOUTH TO TAKE UP POSITIONS ALONG THE COASTAL HIGHWAY BETWEEN TYRE AND SIDON. THE GOVERNMENT HAS ADVERTISED THIS AS ITS FIRST STEP IN TRYING TO ASSERT ITS SOVEREIGNTY OVER SOUTH
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LEBANON.

4. BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE MORE OBVIOUS ASPECTS OF THE SOUTHERN LEBANON SITUATION, A QUIET BUT ALL IMPORTANT STRUGGLE IS OCCURRING BETWEEN THE ISRAELIS AND THE PALESTINIANS. BOTH PARTIES ARE POSITIONING THEMSELVES SO THAT, WHEN THE ISRAELIS WITHDRAW, THEIR RESPECTIVE SURROGATES WILL BE THE DOMINANT POLITICAL FORCE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON.

5. FOR THE PALESTINIANS, THE KEY ISSUE IS MAINTAINING A BASE FROM WHICH THEY CAN EXPAND THEIR INFLUENCE FOLLOWING THE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL. TYRE AND ITS VITAL LAND SUPPLY LINE OVER THE Qasimiya Bridge are crucial to this Palestinian aspiration. Tyre, being by far the largest population center in the region, is a natural springboard from which the Palestinians can reassert their influence. BEFORE THIS CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED A STRONG LOYAL POPULATION BASE MUST BE ESTABLISHED AT TYRE; THEREFORE, THE PLO IS URGING ALL PALESTINIANS TO RETURN TO THEIR CAMPS AT TYRE. EMBASSY BEIRUT REPORTS THAT A UN OFFICIAL HAS STATED THAT PERHAPS 50 TO 60 PERCENT OF ALL PALESTINIANS WHO HAD FLED FROM TYRE TO SIDON HAD RETURNED HOME ON APRIL 3. OTHERS MOVED SOUTH YESTERDAY AND THOSE IN BEIRUT WERE TO FOLLOW IN THE NEXT FORTY-EIGHT HOURS. THE PALESTINIANS ARE ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT A PERMANENT ISRAELI PRESENCE IN THE SOUTH AND A POSSIBLE REASSERTION OF LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY.

6. AS FOR THE ISRAELIS, THEY ARE ATTEMPTING TO EFFECT A PERMANENT CHANGE IN THE BALANCE OF FORCES IN SOUTHERN LEBANON, SO THAT THE PALESTINIANS CAN BE PERMANENTLY EXCLUDED FROM THE REGION AND CLOSE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL TIES CAN BE ESTABLISHED BETWEEN ISRAEL AND ALL THE SOUTHERN LEBANESE NOT JUST THE CHRISTIANS. TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS, THE ISRAELIS APPEAR TO BE PLANNING TO CREATE

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UNDER MAJOR HADDAD--PERHAPS LINKED WITH THE LEBANESE ARMY IF POSSIBLE--A MIXED CONFESSIONAL STRIKE FORCE CAPABLE OF KEEPING THE PALESTINIANS FROM MOVING BACK INTO THE AREA. THIS STRIKE FORCE IS TO BE ASSISTED BY TRAINED SHIITE AND CHRISTIAN AUXILIARIES. THEY ARE ALSO BUILDING ROADS AND NEW GOOD FENCE OPENINGS. THIS INFRASTRUCTURE WILL FACILITATE MILITARY COOPERATION BETWEEN THE IDF AND HADDAD'S FORCES AND WILL MAKE ECONOMIC INTERCHANGE MORE CONVENIENT.

7. FOR THE ISRAELI PLAN TO WORK, THE LOCAL LEBANESE POPULATION MUST RETURN TO ITS HOMES, AND THE ISRAELIS ARE ENCOURAGING THEM TO DO SO. EXTENSIVE EFFORTS HAVE BEEN MADE TO REASSURE THE LEBANESE THAT THEY WILL NOT BE HARMED. PRE-WAR HOMES HAVE BEEN CONSTRUCTED IN VILLAGES WHERE WAR DAMAGE WAS GREAT. NEVERTHELESS, THE FLOW OF LEBANESE REFUGEES BACK TO THEIR VILLAGES HAS BEEN VERY SLOW.

8. ONE INHIBITING FACTOR IN THE RETURN OF SHIITE TO THE SOUTH APPEARS TO BE MAJOR HADDAD'S RECRUITMENT PROGRAM. ACCORDING TO LEBANESE PARLIAMENT SPEAKER, KAMAL ASSAD, HADDAD'S MEN WERE GOING AROUND TELLING PEOPLE THEY HAD A CHOICE OF ENLISTING IN HIS ARMY OR LEAVING. THIS HAD CREATED A GOOD DEAL OF APPREHENSION ON THE PART OF YOUNG MEN WHO WANTED NOTHING TO DO WITH HADDAD. MOREOVER, THE PALESTINIANS WILL BE DISCOURAGING LEBANESE ENTRY INTO ISRAELI OCCUPIED AREAS. THE PALESTINIANS ARE ALSO LIKELY TO PROTEST ALLEGED CASES OF THE IDF PREVENTING LEBANESE FLEEING THE OCCUPIED SOUTH. THE RESULT OF THIS BATTLE FOR CONTROL OF THE SOUTHERN LEBANESE IS LIKELY TO BE A PRIMARY FACTOR IN DETERMINING THE FUTURE OF SOUTHERN LEBANON. (SECRET)

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9. ISRAEL-EGYPT. DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN HAS SAID IN VARIOUS FORUMS THAT HE BELIEVES, BASED ON HIS RECENT CAIRO TRIP, THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO OVERCOME THE PRESENT DIFFICULTIES AND REACH A PEACE SETTLEMENT WITH EGYPT; ACCORDING TO ISRAELI PRESS REPORTS. EMBASSY TEL AVIV

OBSERVED THAT THERE IS STILL ON THE WHOLE NO CONSENSUS IN ISRAEL AS TO THE RESULTS OF WEIZMAN'S TALK WITH SADAT LAST WEEK. WEIZMAN IS CLEARLY IN A PARADOXICAL POSITION. UNDER THE GUN WITHIN HERUT AND THE CABINET AND SHOWN TO BE LESS A POLITICAL THREAT TO BEGIN THAN THOUGHT EARLIER, HE NEVERTHELESS IS VIEWED BY MANY AS THE ONLY REMAINING OPENING TO EGYPT.

10. EMBASSY CAIRO NOTED, ON THE OTHER HAND, THAT SADAT IS RECEIVING WIDESPREAD CRITICISM FROM OFFICIALS, SENIOR JOURNALISTS AND THE PUBLIC FOR HAVING PERMITTED WEIZMAN'S LAST VISIT WHILE IDF FORCES WERE IN LEBANON, ALTHOUGH THIS CRITICISM HAS NOT BEEN SEEN IN THE MEDIA. AL-AHRAM, MEANWHILE, CLAIMED THAT WEIZMAN'S VISIT WAS PART OF A "SWEEPING CAMOUFLAGE OPERATION" BY ISRAEL TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF HAVING OFFERED SOMETHING NEW.

11. IN HIS RECENT SPEECH AT DAKHLA OASIS, SADAT DECLARED THAT THE PEACE PROCESS IS STILL VALID, BUT SAID THE NEXT STEP WAS UP TO ISRAEL. ACCORDING TO EMBASSY CAIRO, SADAT SEEMS RECENTLY TO HAVE UNDERLINED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE TO THE PEACE PROCESS BY SAYING THAT HE AND WEIZMAN SPENT MORE TIME ON THIS THAN ANY OTHER SUBJECT. THE EMBASSY NOTED ALSO THAT SADAT STATED IN HIS OCTOBER MAGAZINE INTERVIEW THAT THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM SHOULD BE RESOLVED BY IMPLEMENTING RESOLUTION 242, WHICH HE INTERPRETED AS WITHDRAWAL WITH "SLIGHT AMENDMENTS" TO BE MADE ON THE WEST BANK. THIS REMARK IS THE FIRST PUBLIC REFERENCE THE EMBASSY CAN RECALL TO POSSIBLE "AMENDMENTS" TO THE BORDER. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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12. ALGERIA. THE BOUMEDIENE REGIME, REALIZING THAT IT CANNOT BRING ABOUT A POLISARIO MILITARY VICTORY IN THE SAHARA AND BESET BY INTERNAL PROBLEMS, SEEMS INTERESTED IN INVOLVING THE US AS A MEDIATOR. THERE IS NO CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE, HOWEVER, THAT ALGIERS IS WILLING TO COMPROMISE ON THE BASIC ISSUE OF POLISARIO SELF-DETERMINATION. IT IS ALSO UNCLEAR WHETHER ALGERIA WOULD EXERT PRESSURE ON ITS POLISARIO ALLIES TO ACCEPT WHAT IT CONSIDERS A REASONABLE COMPROMISE.

13. THE ALGERIANS PROBABLY FEEL THAT THEY HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BY US MEDIATION. IN THEIR VIEW:

(A) THE RECENT US DECISION TO DENY MOROCCO WEAPONS FOR USE IN THE SAHARA SUGGESTS THAT US SUPPORT FOR MOROCCO'S SAHARAN POLICY IS LUKEWARM.

(B) PARTICIPATION IN NEGOTIATIONS WOULD ENHANCE THE POLISARIO'S STATURE AND ENABLE IT TO

PRESENT A GOOD CASE FOR SELF-DETERMINATION BY
PLAYING ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS ANGLE.

(C) MOROCCO WOULD BE DISCREDITED IN US EYES IF
IT REFUSED TO BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS OR, ONCE
NEGOTIATIONS BEGAN, IF IT FAILED TO COMPROMISE
ON THE SELF-DETERMINATION ISSUE.

14. ALGERIA'S WILLINGNESS TO CONSIDER NEGOTIATIONS
LARGELY REFLECTS THE STALEMATE ON THE BATTLEFIELD SINCE
THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR. INTERVENTION BY THE FRENCH
AIR FORCE AND MOROCCO'S REINFORCEMENT OF ITS MAURITANIAN
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ALLY IN LATE 1977 ENDED AN IMPRESSIVE STRING OF POLISARIO
VICTORIES. THE GUERRILLAS CAN STILL CONDUCT HIT-AND-RUN
RAIDS AND SABOTAGE MAURITANIA'S ECONOMICALLY VITAL RAIL
LINE, BUT THEY CAN NO LONGER OPERATE WITH IMPUNITY IN
500-MAN UNITS. FURTHER, THE DEFEAT OF THE LEFT IN THE
FRENCH ELECTIONS ENSURES CONTINUED FRENCH SUPPORT FOR
THE MOROCCO-MAURITANIAN ALLIANCE, INCLUDING AIR SURVEIL-
LANCE AND THE THREAT OF RENEWED TACTICAL AIR SUPPORT.
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